



The family of Armstrong was in ancient times settled on the Scottish Border, and, springing from this parent stock, several branches at a very early era became located in the Northern counties of England. One, established at Tyndale in Northumberland, had continued there for nine generations, at the period of the Visitation in 1623. A third section is mentioned as fixed at Thorpe so early as the eleventh year of Richard II, and gives the Pedigree in an uninterrupted succession to the year 1672. Tradition affirms that the original surname was Fairbairn, and that it was changed to Armstrong on the following occasion: An ancient King of Scotland, having his horse killed under him in battle, was immediately remounted by Fairbairn, his armour bearer, on his own horse. For this timely assistance, the King amply rewarded him with lands on the Borders, and to perpetuate the memory of so important a service, as well as the manner in which it was performed (for Fairbairn took the King by the thigh, and set him on the saddle), his Royal Master gave him the name of Armstrong and assigned him for Crest an armed hand and arm, in the hand a leg and foot in armour, couped at the thigh, all proper.

The Armstrongs of the Border were at the head of a numerous and warlike clan, who, upon differences that arose between the two Crowns, made frequent inroads into the Northern Counties of England, encountering the enemy, wherever they met with them, and were occasionally assisted by the other neighbouring Clans of their alliance. The most famed leader of this bold and adventurous Clan was John Armstrong, the Laird of Giltnockie Hall, a strong castle situated on the west side of the River Esk in the Parish of Carnaby. This manse is still known as the residence of this distinguished Chieftain, and the spacious ruins that remain until this day evince how strong a position it must have been in former times. In this Fortress John Armstrong maintained for many years, sumptuous state and considerable forces, harassing by continued incursions the neighbouring counties of England, until at length, delivered by treachery into the power of James IV, he was executed, together with many of his retainers, by the King's orders at Carlingrig about the year 1530. His son Christopher, succeeded him as Laird of Giltnockie, and a younger son as Laird of Mangerton (a castle standing on the south-west bank of the River Liddle, twenty miles north-east of Carlisle) who had the good fortune to escape the execution at Carlingrig. He married and had two sons, the younger of whom left Scotland some years after the death of Queen Elizabeth and seated himself in the County of Fermanagh, where he became the founder of a numerous family whose branches flourish in those parts.

The elder son of the Laird of Giltnockie was the father of Andrew Armstrong, born 1576. At the breaking out of the Rebellion in 1641, he embraced a military life and served as an Officer of Horse in the Army of Charles I for several years, with great reputation. He married a Scottish lady named Alexander, and had one son, Andrew, whose son John born 31st March, 1674, was a very distinguished Officer and Engineer, who served with the highest reputation under the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene, but especially at the Siege of Bouchain, where his services were deemed so important by the Duke that his Grace caused a picture to be painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller, wherein Colonel Armstrong is represented with a plan of Bouchain in his hand. This painting is now at Marlborough House, St. James'. In 1712, Colonel Armstrong replaced General Cadogan as Quarter-Master General, and on the conclusion of the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, he obtained the commission of Major-General of His Majesty's forces. At length, after having served the Crown for more than half a century, this gallant and distinguished Officer died at his house in the Tower on 15th April 1742, and was buried with full military honours there. When his death was announced to George III, his Majesty exclaimed, "England has indeed had a loss" and ordered a Monument to be erected to his memory in the Tower.

General Armstrong founded the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich in 1716.

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*Copied from the Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland (enjoying territorial possessions and high official rank, but uninvested with heritable honours).*

*By John Burke, 1738.*

